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AUTHOR Walcer, Carol S.
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ABSTRACT

This paper reports a study of the influence of two parent education programs on mothers' personality processes as measured by the Loevinger Scale of Ego Development. Participating in either a Discussion Group program focusing primarily on the mother's needs or a Toy Demonstration program focusing mainly on the child, low income black mothers (n=61) were administered the Loevinger Sentence Completion Test, a projective instrument, in their homes by black, female interviewers at the end of the first and second years of a 2-year study. Eighteen test items were scored for analysis. Results of several statistical manipulations indicate that Discussion Group effects on Loevinger performance were significant. Because an alternative explanation for positive program effects is a reduction of adversive influences in the program mothers' lives, stress was measured by the Slaughter-Pearson SOHE Scale. It was found that stress was positively related to ego growth in the overall sample, rather than negatively as might be expected. (Author/RH)

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SYMPOSIUM: TOWARDS NEW CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL INFANT INTERVENTION PROGRAMS--TARGETING PARENTS?

EGO DEVELOPMENT AND PARENTING STYLE: A DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF MATERNAL ATTITUDES[1]

Carol S. Walcer
Committee on Human Development
University of Chicago

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INTRODUCTION

Early intervention studies typically focus on child performance outcomes, or less typically, on parent-child interaction variables. Rarely, however, do intervention studies attempt to assess the consequences of intervention on parental psychological functioning. This study is based upon the belief that the effectiveness of any social intervention is dependent upon a personal impact on its participants; in particular, the belief that parent education for mothers of young children should positively influence maternal personality processes. Few studies of the impact of parent education programs on parental personality processes have been conducted. Chilman (1973) reports only one program which made a systematic attempt to assess maternal personality as part of the intervention outcomes.

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Hereford (1963) included a Parent Attitude Survey (based on items from the PARI scale developed by Schaeffer and Bell) in his evaluation measures of a community wide parent-education project carried out in Austin, Texas. Analysis of the survey revealed that the measured responses for the experimental group changed in the desired direction more than any of the three control groups. This study was important for its inclusion of a personality measure in the design and for its significant program results on the parent attitude scale. What is lacking however, is an encompassing personality perspective from which to interpret and evaluate these findings. Was the parent education program successful in changing only particular attitudes, or was it a stimulus to more basic changes in personality organization? Specifically, did the intervention precipitate a fundamental and perhaps enduring reorganization of the parents' orientation to the social interactive environment?

The present study is an attempt to explore these questions using a cognitive-developmental approach to personality organization

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or ego development (Loevinger, 1966). This approach views personality as an individual's overall mode of defining and integrating concepts of self in relation to others in a social world. As elaborated by Loevinger (1966), ego development proceeds through seven levels; as in Piaget's system, these stages form an invariant hierarchical order, with each stage being more complex than the last. The first three levels or Preconformist stages may be characterized as being reactive to the social environment in a self-centered way. Loevinger characterizes the Preconformist as being preoccupied with self protection, control and personal wishes. The Conformist stage involves more active participant with the social world; Conformist individuals are concerned with appearance, social acceptability and behavioral conformity. Finally, the last three levels, or Post-Conformist stages, are characterized by a proactive stance towards the social environment. Loevinger portrays Post-conformists as being preoccupied with differentiated feelings and motives, psychological causation of behavior, and self respect and self fullfillment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study addresses the question of whether our parent education programs influenced mothers' personality processes as measured by the Loevinger Scale of ego development. One other question stemming from our choice of the Loevinger framework was addressed. That is: How stable is ego development over time as measured in this population?

METHOD

The data for this analysis were collected as part of the Slaughter study (Dec. 1978). The low income black mothers in our study were administered the Loevinger Sentence Completion Test in their homes by black, female intervewers at the end of the first and second years of the two year study. The Loevinger scale is a projective test consisting of 36 items and scored by a complex coding system derived from Loevinger's conceptualization of ego development. Complete data were available for 61 such participants.

Table 1 contains the 18 items that were scored for this analysis. The use of this shortened form was dictated by time constraints. Extensive pilot testing was done in order to make the shortened version as comparable to the overall standardized version as possible. Coder reliability for the Loevinger shortened version was .90 (2 coders). Elaboration of the testing and scoring procedures may be obtained by request.

RESULTS

Preliminary T-test analyses of the changes on Loevinger scores from Time 1 to Time 2 within each program group indicated that the

intervention experience was a significant factor. Table 2 presents data which indicates that the Discussion group increased significantly from Time 1 to Time 2, and was significantly higher at Time 2 than the Control group. Both the Toy Demonstration and Control groups evidenced a tendency to decline in Loevinger scores over time.

These latter results support similar findings by Redmore and Waldman (1975) for short-term test-retest reliability trends. However, the test-retest coefficient for the Control sample over a period of one year was .49 ($p=.02$), indicating considerable stability.

Table 3 presents a regression analysis using the best maternal variables of both years to predict to Loevinger scores in the second year. The intervention experience was the second strongest predictor, increasing in strength from seventh at the end of the first year.

A multivariate, repeated measures analysis was done to confirm these findings and to control for the influence of other possibly confounding factors. For example, it could be hypothesized that the Discussion group participants became more verbally fluent than others who obtain at lower scores. Loevinger herself has noted that verbal fluency is a factor in higher performance on this measure. For this analysis we counted all words used by each of our respondents to the Time 1 and Time 2 Loevinger scale.

Stress (Sohe) was also considered, because an alternative explanation for positive program effects is a reduction of adversive influences in the program mothers' lives. Stress was measured by the Slaughter-Pearson SOHE Scale, a 9 point checklist of potential sources of stress or pressure on the mother and her family in the year prior to being interviewed. Scores reflect the number of items checked. Table 4 presents the SOHE items used in this analysis.

The main findings of this multivariate analysis are outlined in Table 5. The overall F for the ANOVA testing for program effects on Loevinger performance and word count at Time 2 was significant. The univariate F for program effect on Word Count 2 alone was not significant, suggesting that the program experience was not having a significant effect on increasing verbal fluency over time. The univariate F for program effect on Loevinger at Time 2, with the effects of Word Count 2 eliminated is significant. Figure 1 illustrates a post hoc analyses of this finding. Using the group estimated mean difference scores, the Scheffe T-test showed the Discussion group to be significantly different from both the Toy Demonstration and Control groups on Loevinger performance over time.

Table 5 also illustrates the results of a regression analysis using Word Count 1, Loevinger 1 and Stress 1 as predictors to Word Count 2, and Loevinger 2 performance. The overall F for this analysis was significant ($F=9.28$). Using a stepwise procedure, the multivariate F for stress ($F=3.95$) and the univariate F for stress ($F=7.31$) were also significant. These findings illustrate that stress alone

accounts for 8% of the known variance in Loevinger performance over time in this sample. Examination of the standardized beta weights indicates that the relationship between stress and Loevinger performance is positive; as stress scores increase Loevinger scores tend to increase as well.

To test the hypothesis that program group would interact with stress in Loevinger performance, the regression lines for stress predicting to Loevinger within each program group were compared. The test for parallelism showed no significant differences between groups, and thus no significant interaction effect between program group and stress.

DISCUSSION

PROGRAM EFFECTS

The Discussion group program thus appears to have impacted personality processes as measured by Loevinger's test of ego development. This finding gives added dimensions to the results reported by Hereford (1963); it suggests that such changes can reflect fundamental personality reorganization rather than isolated changes in expressed attitudes or increases in verbal fluency. The results offer the hope that such program effects reflect relatively stable and enduring changes in the ways the participating mothers evaluate social interactions with their family and children.

The finding of significant gains for the Discussion group but not for the Toy Demonstration group is consistent with the goals of these two programs. The Discussion group provides an environment which is primarily focused upon the mother; it seekds to be supportive of her needs as a minority woman as well as a mother. It provides a figure with whom the mothers can identify (the social worker) and cultivates a sense of group identification which can serve as a foundation for individual development.

The Toy Demonstration program, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the child. Although the Toy Demonstrator provides the mother with a role model, the interactions between mother and Demonstrator are limited to a specific task and goal--that of facilitating the child's cognitive skills. The progrm thus offers the mother less opportunities to focus on her own needs and identity and provides fewer supports for personal growth than the Discussion group.

STRESS EFFECTS

A surprising and significant finding of the present study is that stress (as measured by the SOHE) is positively related to ego growth in the overall sample, rather than negatively as might be expected. It is possible that moderate stress creates a state of cognitive awareness which facilitates sensitivity to and understanding of others as well as self. Using terminology from cognitive developmental theory, one might say that stress introduces disequili-

brium in cognitive organization; the individual strives for equilibrium again through a process of assimilation and accomodation, resulting in cognitive reorganization and growth. This explanation is certainly compatible with the social-cognitive formulations of Loevinger's theory.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the present study provides evidence that parent education experience and stressful home experience can effect personality change and growth. Taken together these findings suggest that environmental stimuli are strong factors in the ways individuals conceptualize and derive meaning from the social world.

The real import of these findings, however, stems from their relationship to other findings of the Slaughter study. The changes in personality orientation achieved by the women in the Discussion group are paralleled by differences in maternal attitudes, in performance in the parenting role and by noticeable advances in child outcomes. Thus, our belief that parent-child intervention will succeed when the parents as well as the children are impacted in a meaningful way finds strong support in the data from this analysis.

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TABLE 1 ITEM STEMS FROM LOEVINGER SENTENCE COMPLETION TEST CODED FOR PRESENT STUDY

Item	Stem
1	Raising a family_____
2	Most men think that women_____
3	When they avoid me_____
4	If my mother_____
7	My mother and I_____
9	Education_____
11	Women are lucky because_____
12	My father_____
13	A pregnant woman_____
15	A wife should_____
18	A woman's body_____
19	When a child won't join in group activities_____
21	When they talk about sex, I_____
24	A woman feels good when_____
28	A good mother_____
31	When she thought of her mother, she_____
32	If I can't get what I want_____
34	My conscience bothers me if_____

TABLE 2

CHANGES IN LOEVINGER SCORE BY PROGRAM GROUPS;

TIME 1 TO TIME 2

Loevinger Ego Development		Discussion	Toy Demo.	Control
Time 1	$\bar{x}$	2.88	3.19	3.00
	sd	1.48	1.55	1.50
	N	24	26	31
Time 2	$\bar{x}$	3.50*	2.81	2.24*
	sd	1.67	1.36	1.26
	N	20	21	25
T-Tests Comparison of Means		-3.19*	.82	1.69
		p=.015	p=.42	p=.106
		df=17	df=19	df=23

TABLE 3

STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS;
PREDICTORS OF 02 YEAR LOEVINGER EGO DEVELOPMENT SCORE

Step	Variables	Multiple R	R Squared	R Square Change	F Ratio	DF	P level
1	(01 Year) Developmental Explanations	.397	.158	.158	10.52	1/56	.001
2	Program Group	.532	.283	.125	10.90	2/55	no change
3	Value for Achievement	.647	.418	.134	12.96	3/54	"
4	Stress (02 year)	.673	.452	.034	10.97	4/53	"
5	(01 year) Teaching Perspectives	.688	.473	.021	9.37	5/52	"
6	Value Scale (Part I)	.705	.497	.023	8.42	6/51	"
7	Social Contacts	.721	.520	.023	7.86	7/50	"
8	Stress (01 year)	.732	.535	.015	7.07	8/49	"
9	Age of Mother	.737	.544	.008	6.36	9/48	"
10	Self Esteem	.743	.552	.008	5.79	10/47	"
11	Educational Level	.749	.561	.009	5.35	11/46	"
12	No. of Children	.752	.565	.004	4.88	12/45	"
13	(01 year) Maternal Individuation	.753	.569	.003	4.47	13/44	"
	Constant						

TABLE 4

SOHE SCALE

Please tell me whether any of the following events have occurred since last October by answering "Yes" or "No":

1.	You had to stop or start work, or change jobs.	Yes ( ) No ( )
*2.	You attended school yourself.	Yes ( ) No ( )
3.	You separated from, or reconciled with, a loved one (husband or mate).	Yes ( ) No ( )
4.	You, or someone else very close to you, were seriously ill and went to the hospital, or had to be under a doctor's care for at least a week.	Yes ( ) No ( )
5.	You, or someone very close to you, were in trouble with the law, or a victim of a crime.	Yes ( ) No ( )
6.	A very close friend or relative died.	Yes ( ) No ( )
7.	Someone in the household became pregnant, or a baby was born to someone here at home.	Yes ( ) No ( )
8.	You, or someone here in the household, became very worried or emotionally upset for at least two weeks.	Yes ( ) No ( )
*9.	A child, relative, or friend came to live with the family for at least a month.	Yes ( ) No ( )
*10.	Someone in the family, or living with the family, moved out to live somewhere else.	Yes ( ) No ( )
11.	Serious money problems occurred in the family.	Yes ( ) No ( )

*Items dropped from analysis

TABLE 5 ANALYSES OF PROGRAM, WORD COUNT, AND STRESS EFFECTS ON LOEVINGER PERFORMANCE OVER TIME

Analysis of Variance, Eliminating Effect of WC01, LOEV01, and Stress 01:

Source	Df	Mult. F	Univariate F		
			WC02	LOEV02	LOEV02 (WC02)
Program	2	4.98**	2.12	10.08**	8.16**
Error	55				

Analysis of Regression Eliminating Program Effects:

Source	Df	Mult. F	Univariate F			R^2	
			WC02	LOEV02	LOEV02 (WC02)	WC02	LOEV02
Regression	3	9.28**	11.44**	15.18**	7.46**	.38	.45
Error	55						

Stepwise Analysis:

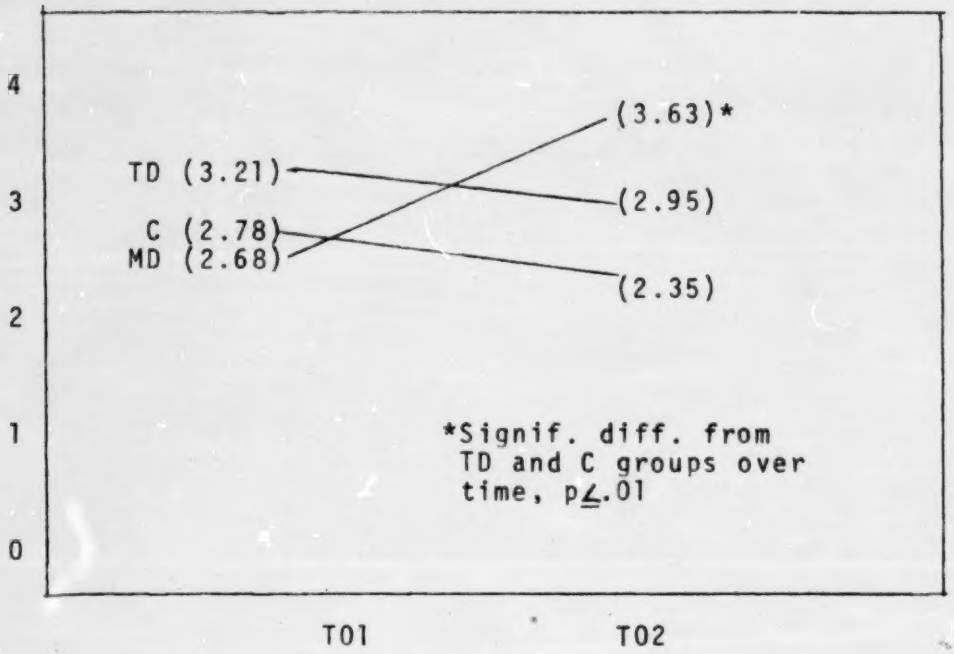
Source	Df	Mult. F	Univariate F			R^2	
			WC02	LOEV02	LOEV02 (WC02)	WC02	LOEV02
WC01	1	11.66**	21.50**	10.55**	1.60	.27	.15
LOEV01 (-WC01)	1	11.41**	9.41**	19.36**	11.61**	.10	.22
STRESS-(WC01 +LOEV01)	1	3.95*	.52	8.04**	7.31**	.01	.08
Parallelism of Regression Hyperplanes	6	.48	.66	.48	.31		

Standardized Beta Weights:

Source	WC02	LOEV02
WC01	.37	.19
LOEV01 (-WC01)	.36	.52
Stress -(WC01 + LOEV01)	.08	.28

WC=Total Word Count on Loevinger Scale
LOEV=TPR Rating, Loevinger Scale
**$p \leq .01$
*$p \leq .025$

Figure 1 Loevinger Estimated Means by Program Group[1]



[1]Using complete data cases (N=61 for Times 01 and 02)